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ABSTRACT

This report provides a summary of testimony delivered at hearings around the country concerning Objectives Four and Five of National Education Goal Five that address the need to increase qualified student college enrollment (especially of minorities) and completion of at least 2 years (Objective Four), and the need to raise the proportion of college graduates who demonstrate an advanced ability in critical thinking, communication, and problem solving (Objective Five). For each objective, major themes forming the oral and written testimonies are identified, and direct quotations from the testimonies are provided in support of each theme. Of the 100 individuals who testified, most supported the objectives though they expressed concerns and questions about the purposes of each objective and how each objective will actually lead to improvements in student learning, instructional practices, the curriculum, and better degree-completion rates, especially for minority students. Many witnesses offered recommendations and suggested additional considerations to review for both objectives, and some pointed out that there are a large number of organizational and institutional initiatives currently under way that already provide useful information and lead to improvements. Appendices contain participant information. (GLR)

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Summary of Public Testimony on Objectives 4 and 5 of Goal 5

by

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with assistance from

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Learning, and Assessment
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Running head: HEARING REPORT

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Introduction

In winter 1990, the President of the United States and Governors announced six educational goals for the nation that are to be achieved by the year 2000. The National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) is responsible for monitoring and reporting the progress of the nation and states towards these goals. Goal Five includes objectives regarding college student learning and persistence towards degree completion. It states, "By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship." The NEGP convened a Task Force on Assessing the National Goal Relating to Postsecondary Education. The Task Force investigated the feasibility and desirability of: (1) a reporting system to monitor the rate at which students enter higher education institutions complete their degree programs and by minority status; and (2) a sample-based collegiate assessment which would provide regular national and state representative indicators of college graduates' abilities. In July 1992, this Task Force presented its recommendations and conclusions to the NEGP. Subsequently, the NEGP held four regional hearings (in Portland, San Francisco, Atlanta, and Chicago) to obtain testimonies from the public regarding the Task Force's recommendations about objectives four and five of Goal Five. Between April and May, 1993, each hearing was held in conjunction with a major national conference in higher education.

The purpose of this report is to highlight the major concerns and issues raised by individuals about these objectives. In the first section of this report, testimony is

summarized regarding objective four which states that "the proportion of those qualified students (especially minorities) who enter college, who complete at least two years, and who complete their degree programs will increase substantially." In the second section, testimony is summarized regarding objective five which states that "the proportion of college graduates who demonstrate an advanced ability to think critically, communicate effectively, and solve problems will increase substantially." In each section, major themes from the oral and written testimonies are identified. Direct quotations from the testimonies are provided that support each theme and serve to expand the points.

A total of 100 individuals provided testimony in written and/or oral presentations. Five people testified solely about objective four, 23 people testified solely about objective five and 72 people testified about both objectives. The individuals who testified represent a wide spectrum of professionals including university presidents, testing company presidents, executive directors of accrediting associations, faculty members in specific disciplines, university assessment leaders, academic administrators, policy makers, and students. They also reflect the diversity of institutional types across the United States including community colleges and research universities as well as both public and private institutions. A significantly low number of employers testified. Appendix A contains several tables with specific information about the participants. Appendix B lists the specific individuals and their institutional or professional affiliations.

Most individuals support objectives four and five of Goal Five. However, they have concerns and questions about the purposes of each objective and how the objective itself

will actually lead to improvements in student learning, instructional practices, the curriculum, and better degree-completion rates, especially for minority students. They offer recommendations about how to proceed with each objective and suggest additional considerations to review in both objectives. They also outline current organizational and institutional initiatives under way, especially relative to objective five that already provide useful information and lead to improvements. They believe that the objectives call for work that is already conducted by institutions and duplicates many quality activities already in place.

Section I: Summary of Testimony on Goal Five, Objective Four

Individuals who testified broadly support increasing the number of qualified students (especially minorities) who enter college and complete at least two years in a collegiate program. Most individuals praise the NEGP for its efforts to elicit constructive input from the public and the higher education community in an open, public forum. They generally have a favorable view of the Task Force recommendation that "a systematic and coordinated effort at the federal level should be developed to report completion rates." While people express their support for the proposed reporting system, their views are contingent upon further clarification and resolution of substantive issues including the purpose of this initiative and the consideration of alternative approaches.

People have concerns and questions about this objective. First, many ask if the proposed reporting system is feasible. Second, individuals express concern about costs associated with this proposed effort and believe it duplicates work already underway in a number of states. Third, a number of witnesses testify that they do not believe that a reporting system would increase student degree completion rates. Fourth, some individuals question if state-level comparisons will lead to institutional comparisons.

Determining Feasibility

One point raised is how the Task Force will assure or guarantee accurate and comparable reporting measures. The chair of the university assessment committee at the University of Connecticut emphasizes

what the proposal actually implies is the establishment of an expensive national tracking system for students. For example, what about a student who completes two years at one institution, then transfers to another in-state institution, where he goes for one year, drops out, moves out of state and works for two years, then reenters and completes his degree seven years later? How do we track him? Which institution is 'responsible' for his graduation? What implication should we draw from his failure to complete a degree at the institution which he entered?"

This testimony is confirmed by the recent difficulty experienced when California tried to collect completion/persistence data for tracking that state's college students. The executive director of the California Postsecondary Commission underscored the difficulty of obtaining clean, complete data because of mobile student populations, transfers, "stop-outs," and the challenge of institutional cooperation. In fact, in California, one university system is unwilling to provide student information for central reporting purposes because of right-to-privacy concerns. Moreover, the president of California State University, San Marcos, stresses that differences between institutions, such as variations in student populations, regional missions, and in the number of course credits to complete major programs, compounds the difficulty of centralized data collection.

Witnesses, particularly from those affiliated with urban universities and community colleges which serve at-risk students, made two related points. First, is there enough preliminary data to know that at-risk students are not graduating at a high rate? Second, would funds for measurement be better spent on programs to improve retention of these students. The president of El Paso Community College states,

Maybe it's not fair to say that the establishment of a national reporting system versus addressing the needs of special populations is like 'putting the cart before the horse.'

It seems a little foolish to measure what we have without the infusion of programs, services, and funding to break the educational grid lock.

The director of Information Management and Institutional Research at Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis concurs:

The problem is not that we don't have enough indicators, but rather that we don't make effective use of the existing ones ... the only noticeable and measurable change (from the proposed reporting system) will be the expansion of the administrative lattices of both federal government and university administration. If you want to throw money somewhere, place it in programs that are designed to increase minority participation, or reduce student costs, or provide counseling and career development services to students.

Several witnesses believe that the proposed reporting format of aggregate persistence/completion data by state and higher education sector suggest more uniformity than is actually the case. From their perspective, an aggregate figure would be meaningless and misleading because of the broad differences that exist between institutions even within the same sector. For example, four-year public institutions may vary in terms of selectivity of students, regional mission, student populations, resources, program offerings, campus housing, and financial aid availability. Several individuals contend that ignoring the variation between institutions through aggregate reporting will result in data that will defy reasonable interpretation. Short of institution by institution comparisons, (an approach that also received a number of objections), an acceptable reporting system should convey the diversity among institutions within the states and sectors of higher education.

The main concern is that simply setting new goals and standards will not automatically lead to improvements in the lives of students who are underprepared or

underserved. If a reporting system is developed, it should take into account the wide diversity of institutional characteristics including the differences in student populations.

Cost Implications

A number of witnesses express concern regarding the duplication of reporting requirements originating at the federal level. In particular, there is apprehension about the costs and resources necessary to collect and prepare data to satisfy a multitude of reporting requirements. A member of the Maricopa Community College District Governing Board states, "What we have great difficulty supporting are several different completion rates, each calculated in a different way, on a slightly different subset of students, for different pieces of federal legislation."

Representatives of independent colleges were particularly concerned about costs. A college president who spoke on behalf of the 1,600 institutions connected with the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities assert that the independent sector should be reimbursed for any new administrative expenses associated with responding to the proposed reporting system. Leaders of both private and public institutions also express concerns about the costs and benefits of the proposed reporting system. Based on his experience with Ohio's Uniform Information System, the associate vice-president of Kent State University suggests that as a cost-saving measure, a stratified-sample be conducted instead. The costs will hinge on the level of detail required in the system.

Interface with Student-Right-to-Know Act

Several witnesses concur with the recommendations of the Task Force that the development of comparative statistics should dovetail with the reporting associated with the Student-Right-to-Know Act. However, there is some confusion about the proposed reporting requirements. As several witnesses point out, the completion/persistence reporting requirements proposed by the Task Force to meet the national goals and the reporting requirements drafted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to satisfy the Student-Right-to-Know Act are different in significant ways. The March 26, 1993, draft of the NCES graduation rates survey asks for data grouped by institution for full-time, first-time, degree-seeking undergraduate students. On the other hand, the Task Force asks for data aggregated at the state level and broken down by full-time and part-time students.

Most witnesses are more concerned about the impact of the NCES survey as drafted. For many institutions, in particular community colleges, full-time, first-time, degree-seeking students represent only a small segment of their student population. For example, in Arizona only two percent of Maricopa Community College students fall into the Student Right-to-Know cohort, according to a governing board member. Many students come to college as transfer or non-degree seeking students. Similarly, many students attend part-time and may intend to transfer to another institution before receiving a degree.

Impact Upon Completion Rates

Many individuals testified that they do not believe that a reporting system would actually increase the number of students who complete their degree programs. The dean of

Arts and Sciences at the University of Delaware notes, "I am very concerned that we not invest a great deal of time, effort, and resources in a process that very well may not help us to better inform our public about the quality of education we offer and certainly will not improve it." The president of California State University, Hayward, agrees and states, "Nothing in the Task Force report speaks to how the reporting system or the reports themselves will serve to increase the proportion of students who complete their degree programs, which after all is the stated objective." Furthermore, the president of American College Testing Program states, "Reporting completion rates will let us know only whether the proportion of students getting degrees changes; it will not cause that proportion to increase, nor will it say anything about changes in the proportion of students entering college or completing two years." The executive director of the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges asks, "How might the information be put to use? What is going to bring about progress? As desirable as the goal may be, its attainment is unlikely without specific means and objectives, understood and accepted by all those who are to make it happen."

Consistent with the recommendation of the Task Force to supplement persistence/completion measures with contextual information to aid interpretation, the president of California State University, San Marcos, suggests that students and parents may benefit from information pertaining to variations in degree requirements across majors, the impact of course loads on time-to-degree, and the need to carefully plan course schedules with the help of academic advisers. According to the vice-president and director of the

Center for Adult Learning and Educational Credentials of the American Council on Education, interpretation of year-to year changes in the persistence/completion indicators will also be complicated by shifts in policies and practices that have little connection to changes in the quality of students' learning and achievement. For instance, fluctuations of persistence/completion indicators can be a function of: (1) state policies that restrict or increase access; (2) a rise or drop in standards for certification, licensure, or registration; or (3) the provision or lack of provision of effective academic or vocational counseling.

With the rapid change in technology in the work place, college officials, especially those from community colleges, suggest that graduation is too narrow a measure of success. "We must not be bound by expectations and measurements that do not accurately reflect the full reality of today's learning population," states the associate director of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. Students may attend college for targeted retraining, skills enhancement, and for the frequently cited purposes of "lifelong learning." According to a board member of the Maricopa Community College system, at least 75 percent of the students in this system have no desire to graduate from a certificate or degree program. Similarly, in Minnesota, most students who register for five or fewer credits a semester are not pursuing a two-year degree. The American Council on Education predicts booster shots of education and training will be needed throughout an individual's lifetime. Broad concern is expressed in terms of how the NEGP's proposed reporting system will factor in non-degree seeking students and the attainment of credentials other than degrees.

Several witnesses suggest changes to the proposed reporting system to truly reflect the college attendance behavior of students and the different roles of institutions.

Community college leaders suggested that an additional column be added to the report to record transfers from two-year to four-year colleges. For instance, in the Minnesota Community College System, more students transfer to four-year colleges without associate degrees than students with completed degrees. There are many ways of defining transfer rates, and care should be taken to develop a definition that is valid and readily understandable, according the director of the Ford Foundation Funded Transfer Assembly project at UCLA. The chancellor of the Minnesota Community College System proposes that the measurement process be expanded to include the development of measures to judge the value of continuing education in training and retraining a globally competitive work force. She also proposes the development of measures to count related job placement of occupational programs.

Since students frequently change their declaration of intent to seek a degree, the president of Jefferson College suggests that levels of student intent and the changes in intent be taken into account in any national reporting system. Because completing a degree may begin to fade as the classic criterion of success as new criteria for successful utilization of higher education emerge, the president of the Independent Colleges of Indiana suggests designing a flexible data-gathering architecture. In this system, the federal government would concentrate on defining basic data elements, and institutions would be responsible

for maintaining persistence/completion "data modules" that could be expanded or contracted as new data elements are defined.

Comparisons Among States and Individual Institutions

A number of individuals are concerned that state-level comparisons will inevitably lead to institution-by-institution comparisons. This is an unfavorable notion to most witnesses. A college president states,

If Ohio Dominican College wants to look better when the Student-Right-to-Know statistics are published, we should quit wasting our resources and ingenuity on programs like weekend college, second chance, and patriots (programs that serve part-time students, at-risk-first generation students, and veterans). We should instead go after more bright students from affluent families, for those are most likely to complete college.

Several individuals believe that lower completion rates do not in themselves indicate failure or ineffectiveness. Furthermore, they are concerned that institutions serving students who are most in need of access to education will be penalized by the use of persistence/completion rates; consequently, institutions will shift their priorities to recruit more affluent students who are more likely to graduate. According to the president of Berry University, competition to raise completion rates will penalize experimentation and risk-taking on the part of institutions whose mission is to serve "high-risk" students. Moreover, there is a concern that institutions may lower their academic standards in order to increase their graduation rates. "Bodies will just be moved through the system more quickly. Retention and graduate rates are not quality indicators," states the representative from the South Carolina's Higher Education Assessment Network. Some individuals

believe that institutional data made available to each state will be accessible to the public or that aggregate reporting will result in the subsequent mandate of institution-level reporting.

There are also doubts that consumers would benefit from institution-level data. An analysis of freshmen retention of independent colleges reveals that there is a direct relationship between the admissions selectivity of an institution and persistence, according to the president of Randolph-Macon College. Given this relationship, he contends that the notion that students will become better consumers is unrealistic. On the contrary, the selection of high-retention-rate institutions by students will be restricted by their ability to meet entrance requirements.

Consulting With States and Associations for Assistance

Thirty-eight states have begun to develop composite statistics on persistence and graduation rates according to the testimony of the vice-chair of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. In addition, many independent institutions participate in consortia that collect standardized graduation data. Many of those who testified suggest that the federal government seek the advice of these states and consortia in developing a reporting system at the federal level. Specific references were made to the Texas LONESTAR system and similar systems in Arizona, California, Ohio (Kent State), Oklahoma (Unitized Data System), and Virginia, as well as the Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) consortium, which resides at Franklin and Marshall College, and the consortium of the Independent Colleges of Indiana.

Section II: Summary of Testimony on Goal Five, Objective Five

Most witnesses support objective five contingent upon the resolution of unclear points and the consideration of additional important areas that need to be included in the Task Force's recommendations. Nearly every person who testified has concerns regarding various aspects of objective five. They believe that the purpose of this proposed national assessment endeavor is unclear and do not understand how it will result in improvements. Witnesses also emphasize that both institutional and student diversity have been ignored in the Task Force's recommendations. Many individuals stress that important skills are missing from objective five. They are also concerned about the high costs associated with such a complex and long-term effort. Some individuals believe that Goal Five calls for work that duplicates many quality assessment initiatives currently under way. Despite their concerns, most individuals recommend concrete ideas about the best way to proceed with assessment based upon their years of experience in higher education.

Purpose of Assessment and How It Will Result in Improvements

A major concern and question is how the proposed national assessment effort will result in improvements and enhancements of student learning. This concern is closely linked with additional testimony that the purpose of this objective is unclear. The Task Force's concludes that "the purpose of developing a national collegiate assessment system is, first and foremost, to monitor the nation's progress toward Goal 5." Individuals testify that simply monitoring the nation's progress will not lead to educational improvements. The associate director of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education advises, "The

strongest caution is a reminder of the danger inherent in viewing assessment and measurement as ends in themselves. Unless assessment is linked to individual institutional planning and strategy development, the data such measures provide will profit us little."

The president of the American College Testing Company concurs:

The Task Force report does not speak to the relationship between the data to be collected and the objectives to be reached. If we do not ask how a yet-to-be-defined sampling of student attainment of yet-to-be-defined standards will help us keep more students in college and improve their education, and if we do not do more to determine how to reach our objectives, we will be collecting data only to collect data. We believe that improving instruction and stimulating higher achievement, not just monitoring progress, should be the purposes of any national assessment effort.

The president of Jefferson College agrees:

if the primary purpose for this endeavor is not explicitly for the student's betterment, then the entire project has a hollow ring to it. If any national assessment is to produce worthwhile results, then student ownership, cooperation, and personal benefit ought to be addressed first and foremost.

The president of Cleary College states:

We disagree with your conclusion on page 5 of the recommendations that a national assessment . . . will almost certainly help to raise standards, and suggest that the result might be a misinterpretation of statistical variation, and institutional dedication to producing better numbers rather than better educated graduates. We hope the Task Force can focus on the use of data/information to improve the unique and individual educational systems of our various postsecondary institutions rather than simply assuring public awareness and accountability.

Most individuals who testified believe that the primary purpose of assessment should be to improve student learning. The "monitoring" function proposed by the Task Force implies a system of accountability where institutions simply report statistics.

Impact Upon Institutional and Student Diversity

Many people testified that the proposed national assessment does not consider or take into account the diversity of institutions in the United States and the diversity of students enrolled in these colleges. The president of California State University at Hayward and representative of the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation states,

I am struck by the insistence upon standards even in the face of the recognition that postsecondary education's goals are so diverse. It is difficult to avoid noticing the implication that single standards can be designed for each of the three skills that will apply to all, in a one-size-fits-all model. Yet we are fully aware that the students themselves vary from one type of institution to the other. If indeed the recommendation is for the development of single standards, to fit all types of institutions, the standards can only be set at the lowest common denominator level. In that case, it is hard to see how national assessment efforts would lead to the increase set forth in the objective.

The president of Westmont College and representative for the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities states,

A foremost concern . . . is that national or state assessment programs should not compromise the freedom of independent colleges and universities to define their respective missions and clientele, and to determine the curricular approaches and educational policies by which they achieve their missions. While there must be accountability, there must also be an equal commitment to maintain the integrity, diversity, and viability of the independent sector. Diversity of the independent sector is one of the great strengths of the American system of higher education. We must resist any approach towards standards or outcome measures that will move toward homogenization of curricula and academic missions.

The Chairman and chief executive officer of the Art Institutes International emphasizes that "increasingly rigid federal, state, and accreditation standards encourage a monolithic curricular and organizational structure of institutions which does not allow for the wide range of learning styles and motivational needs of our diverse student clientele."

The executive director of the Western regional accrediting association outlines some of the main differences in institutions. They "differ in selectivity; serve national, regional, local and special constituencies; differ in resources (there are rich and poor); some are narrowly specialized, others comprehensive, with options for change available; some accept only full-time students; and they differ in financial aid availability." He also describes some major aspects of student diversity:

not all students entering aspire to degrees; many students with degree aspirations change their objectives; many students who enter with non-degree objectives later decide to pursue degrees; many students are self-supporting and will not finish their programs in the traditional time frame; there is an enormous range in prior preparation for advanced study; and local demography varies greatly, with local immigrant concentrations.

Most witnesses believe that this objective must consider student and institutional differences in the development of any assessment initiatives. The assumption that one set of national standards can be applied to all institutions equally raises substantial questions about how each educational experience can be designed to maximize rather than minimize each student's growth and development. A single set of standards can significantly impact and alter the present state of diverse curricula by pushing institutions to develop a homogeneous program even though their students have different aspirations, abilities, and interests.

High Cost and Duplication of Assessment Efforts Already Under Way

Many individuals expressed concern about the enormous complexity of this proposed national assessment and the high cost in financial resources that would be necessary in order to develop such a program. There is a widespread belief that this is a long-term

endeavor that will require substantial funds throughout the entire process and such funds should not be drawn from the institutions.

There are already a large number of faculty, administrators, policy makers, and researchers in institutions and organizations who have substantial experience in designing, implementing, and evaluating innovative assessment activities. The witnesses provide concrete examples and illustrations of mechanisms already in place. According to the vice-chancellor of the Minnesota Community College System, the state has developed special staff programs to train faculty so they will incorporate critical thinking into every college course that is offered. The Chair of the University Assessment Committee at the University of Connecticut describes the assessment program conducted in a wide range of areas including general education, individual academic programs, student life, transfer and graduation rates, and alumni reviews. At California State University, San Marcos, there is a writing requirement of 2500 words in every course which is offered. The president of this institution explains that the writing involves,

more than a simple exiguous of the course materials themselves; rather it requires a synthesis of knowledge gained from previous courses and other extracurricular activities. The faculty has ... been able to assess how a student is doing in his or her major or how students are progressing by the use of the writing requirement.

There are some professional programs in which a standardized test is an indicator of how well students are learning the concepts. The accounting examination is required for students to pass after graduation, and the bar examination must be passed for those going to law school. Because of their homogeneity, all of these types of professional programs

because of their homogeneity may lend themselves to the establishment of indicators. Occupation-specific standards have been developed by educators and practitioners in specific professions. The director of the Committee on Allied Health Education and Accreditation of the American Medical Association stresses that

the professions actively participate in the development and revision of educational standards for allied health education to ensure that the competencies addressed are current and reflect up-to-date technological advances in specific fields. In accreditation, such assessment is used not only to distinguish between strong and weak programs but especially to contribute to the improvement of identified areas of weakness. National Certification examinations reflect the consensus that has been reached in various areas about those things that are expected of program graduates.

In 1989, 96 percent of these health programs reported receiving their students' test scores and 80 percent used them to institute program changes.

Several organizations, including regional accrediting associations and colleges, have established task forces that develop and articulate guiding general principles to be followed in the design and implementation of effective assessment activities. These principles prescribe sound educational practices based upon the collective experience of professionals in higher education. Accreditation agencies, both specialized and institutional, have developed knowledge and expertise in assessing educational effectiveness. As the executive director of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools notes:

We have made clear that all institutions are expected to assess the achievement of their students and have required every institution to have and to be able to describe a program by which it documents student academic achievement. Through its publications and programs, the Commission has provided direct assistance to its member institutions in designing and implementing effective programs for the assessment of student academic achievement. All member institutions participate regularly in a process of self-study and evaluation and peer review designed to certify

to the public the quality and integrity of our institutions and to encourage their improvement.

The president of the American College Testing (ACT) program outlines this company's 34 years of experience, which includes the development of the College Outcome Measures Program (COMP) and the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP). These two instruments assess cognitive skills that cut across many disciplines and assess humanities, social, and natural sciences, and mathematics skills considered important for citizenship and employment. Over 570 colleges have used the COMP and over 345 colleges have used the CAAP instruments. ACT's newest assessment program is WorkKeys which assesses general employability skills. There are many assessment activities under way at colleges and universities that can guide and shape future efforts.

Recommendations

Witnesses outline critical areas to consider and explore in the assessment of student learning. One group of recommendations pertains to specific skills that individuals think should be additional important dimensions to objective five. Individuals also suggest what methods are appropriate to assess student learning. They emphasize that a consensus-building process should be used throughout this endeavor. They also stress the importance of assessing adult student learning and their continuing education. Equally important is the dissemination of good models and research that impacts and offers insights about effective

instructional strategies as well as effective learning styles of college students. The large number of recommendations may serve to guide future activities in this area.

Include Additional Skills

Most witnesses believe that critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication (both oral and written) are important skills that all college graduates need for employment and citizenship. However, many people believe that additional critical skills are missing from objective five or are unclear. A speech professor remarks,

Listening does not appear anywhere in this document. Is listening addressed under another goal or is it assumed to be included in the phrase communicate effectively? Nor is there any discussion of critical viewing skills. We receive a number of mediated messages and need to critically analyze and interpret them (e.g., advertisements, newscasts or news articles, political speeches). Critical viewing skills enable us to better understand and evaluate mediated messages as sources of information and entertainment.

The president of Westmont College and representative of the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities states, "we must go beyond the three indicators articulated in the National Education Goals . . . and consider such qualities as values, creativity, and ethics." Additional people believed that these skills are important. Other individuals stress that the arts and humanities need to be included as important educational areas for college graduates to acquire knowledge.

The professor and chair of the health, physical education and recreation program at Georgetown College believes that "life management skills" should be addressed as well. They include the knowledge and behavioral skills associated with regular physical activity, appropriate dietary practices, stress management, accident prevention, first aid, and health

promotion. This professor concludes that "after all, without appropriate attention to the development and maintenance of a healthy lifestyle, general cognitive skills, higher-order thinking skills, and occupation-specific skills have little relevance." Several individuals believe that there is a lack of attention given to including foreign languages and international study as a means to increase our graduates' abilities to compete internationally. The president of Alcorn State University notes that American students need to be exposed to multinational cultures.

Cognitive literacy and technical competencies are not enough to enable every adult American to be able to compete in a global economy. Consequently, assessment must be made of the extent to which college graduates have been exposed to and have internalized multinational dimensions necessary for effective competition in a global economy.

Use Multiple Methods

Many individuals testified about the importance of using multiple measures to assess student learning. The president of the American Testing Company states,

One thing we have learned in our 34 years is that no single measure can adequately circumscribe the information needed for accurate decision making. The assessment of achievement must cover both the cognitive and the non-cognitive domains, using many different indicators.

Furthermore, the president of the Associated Colleges of the South states, "there is a compelling need to employ accurate indicators reflecting considerable preparation by those most qualified in the testing profession." He notes that for a long time, professionals have measured inputs to determine educational success and that now there is an emphasis on outputs. He believes it is important to review the educational process that occurs between

the inputs and outputs. This analysis should determine what facets and steps in the educational process are effective if a constructive impact is to take place. The president of the American College Testing company agrees and states, "an effort to describe instruction and an even greater effort to encourage research into more effective learning behaviors and instructional practices must accompany the assessment."

Individuals cautioned the NEGP about the complexity of a national assessment program especially in regard to identifying and using appropriate methods to evaluate college graduates' abilities. The chair of the University Assessment Committee at the University of Connecticut illustrated this point by noting that it is easy to develop simple, general goals, but the complexities emerge when the concrete definitions of these skills are reviewed. For example, critical thinking can only be measured in some context with some specific task. "The measurable expression of an abstract skill like critical thinking will vary with a student's discipline and with the mission of the student's institution of higher education." At the University of Connecticut, the faculty reviewed a number of critical-thinking tests and used one in their assessment of the general education curriculum. They found the only thing that this standardized instrument correlated with was the students' incoming SAT scores. The result was redundant information that was not very useful in determining the strengths and weaknesses of the higher education curriculum. Other individuals caution against using commercially available multiple-choice tests and question their usefulness in helping to improve student learning. They suggest that alternative approaches be explored, such as portfolios which include samples of student work during

the entire time they pursue their degree programs. Such qualitative approaches may lead to more useful results.

Identify and Disseminate Good Assessment Models

The president of the College Board states:

Many of our nation's colleges and universities have begun the process of evaluating outcomes. Indeed, some estimates suggest that somewhere between 60 percent to 80 percent of postsecondary institutions across the country are actively engaged in this process. Many, no doubt have experienced success. Others, I am sure, have struggled with the issues of consensus, values, and standard setting. Both experiences--those that have succeeded and those that have abandoned the exercises are worthy of further study by the panel.

Several individuals stressed that the NEGP, the public, and other institutions can learn much from successful models. The vice-chair of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges suggests,

the Panel could fund a project to identify, support, and disseminate information on exemplary programs which advance Goal Five. Or the Panel could seek a cross-section of diverse institutions with sophisticated student assessment programs who would share their data on a regular basis.

Witnesses believe that sharing and disseminating information about successful models and the factors that make them effective would be very helpful to institutions that seek to strengthen their own academic programs and student learning.

Use a Consensus Process and Involve All Constituencies

Several witnesses express concern that the Task Force lacked representation from private colleges and universities, major research institutions, assessment leaders and specialists, students, and the accrediting agencies. They believe that in order for this effort to be effective all constituencies must be involved in a consensus-building process to determine what skills college graduates need, to set appropriate standards and definitions for achievement levels, and to review and evaluate approaches. Faculty and administrators representing the variety of institutions in different geographic locations as well as employers, policy makers, institutional researchers, assessment experts, and higher education coordinating boards need to be included in this dialogue. The chairman and chief executive officer of the Art Institutes International states:

Developing curriculum to meet the needs of the marketplace requires knowledgeable input from industry, developed and refined in partnership with educational institutions. Many institutions which effectively prepare students for work use employer constituted advisory councils selected from marketplace enterprises, to validate curriculum offerings on a semi-annual basis.

He believes that these types of partnerships help to provide a delivery system that insures learning takes place. The president of Westmont College and representative of the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities comments that,

standards for student achievement must reflect a clear understanding of the meaning of a college degree and what a successful student should know and be able to do after a program of study. Standards of institutional effectiveness should reflect how well an institution is utilizing its resources to promote students learning and growth according to the mission and objectives of the institution.

A lack of representation and participation from the relevant stakeholders in the decision-making process decreases the likelihood that significant changes or improvements will be made according to several witnesses. The president of the Associated Colleges of the South stresses that institutional "ownership of this effort will generate valuable data and encourage the productive use of that data. The credibility of the entire undertaking requires such full participation of those closest to the educational process and outcomes."

A philosophy professor at East Carolina University suggests a method for involving faculty in this process. He recommends that copies of final examinations given in introductory courses be solicited from faculty across the United States. They could then be categorized by subject matter, types and difficulty level. This formal review would reveal what was often covered, what was sometimes covered, and what rarely was covered in introductory college courses. On the basis of what is most often taught, a view of the average college education could be outlined and shared with faculty across the United States who seek to improve their own courses.

Address Basic Literacy

Many people believe it is important to link postsecondary assessment with educational efforts under way at elementary and secondary schools. One example of this type of initiative is the Equity 2000 project, which is a partnership with a number of local school districts around the country that helps schools to get all students into pre-algebra in the middle school and into algebra and geometry in high school. The College Board found through research that student learning of algebra and geometry, when coupled with their

aspirations to attend college, leads to the likelihood for continued postsecondary success. Another initiative is Pacesetter, which involves teams of secondary teachers, college faculty, and academic administrators in collaboration with the major national subject matter organizations. Together they strive to develop new course syllabi in key subject matter areas so that teachers can learn to teach higher standards.

Some individuals also testify that the issue of basic literacy needs to be addressed prior to college admission. The chairman and chief executive officer of the Art Institutes International stresses:

We find ourselves replacing or reducing technical coursework to make room for remedial and slow-paced preparatory, basic skills curriculum. This robs us of critical training time or requires innovative ways to extend the already fully allocated time available to a college program.

He asserts that literacy and strong basic skills must become essential outcomes of our nation's elementary and secondary school programs so that a college education can really be a "higher" education. He believes that "education survival skills" should be taught to students before college to increase their likelihood of success. These skills include organization, time management, studying strategies, wellness skills, and goal setting.

Some individuals believe that assessment needs to occur during junior and senior high school. For example, the director of the Council on Social Work Education comments:

The ability to make judgements necessary for informed participation in a democratic society do not begin at the college level. If societal infrastructure are not in place to produce success, the individual will never reach the college level. I am afraid that we are requiring our postsecondary institutions to be judged by their ability to succeed where our public primary and secondary institutions have failed.

She also believes that there is not enough concern about the survival of underdeveloped Americans. The president of the Bellsouth Foundation agrees and hopes that our educational system will be configured so that in the future elementary and secondary schools are fully accountable for basic skills. Then evaluation could begin with the higher-order skills of college graduates.

Include Adult and Minority Students

Some individuals believe that there is too much emphasis in objective five on assessing traditional college graduates and that the definition needs to be expanded to include adult and minority students as well as those students who do not graduate. The president of the Associated Colleges of the South questions, "Do we make a mistake in measuring only the achievement of graduates when an impact is taking place on non-graduates for whom our institutions also have a significant responsibility?" Community college representatives were particularly concerned about this point. Students often attend these institutions to learn new skills, to be retrained for different occupations, and to complete coursework to transfer to another institution. They attend to increase their lifelong learning or for continuing education purposes. For many students attending community colleges, the completion of a degree is not an objective or goal. In a community college system study, 60 percent of the students were pursuing occupational goals with over thirty percent planning to update job skills. About one-third of the students were pursuing personal development work.

It is important that national and state level-standards do not discourage or restrict access to higher education for disadvantaged students. The president of Westmont College cautions that "in Florida, minimum competency testing has disproportionately and adversely affected minority students, even though overall results have produced college students with higher level skills."

Adult basic education should be assessed since these students need high-level reading and thinking skills. In the Minnesota Community College system, 72 percent of the students are unable to do math, 22 percent are unable to read at a college entrance level, and 38 percent do not write at college level when they enter colleges. The chancellor of this system believes that "community colleges are doing more than any other part of the postsecondary arena to build adequate literacy in our adult population." She also calls for more formal studies on the reasons why students (including adults and minorities) attend college and what their intentions are for attendance.

According to the coordinator of the Academic Assistance Program at Columbia College, Chicago, "postsecondary educational institutions should foster literacy, numeracy, work place, and citizenship skills among all students and the success of postsecondary education should be based upon assessment of all students who have been in attendance, rather than only those who graduate." The director of the Adult Learning Center of the American Council on Education emphasizes:

It is important to remember that some 80 percent of the workforce in the year 2000 is already at work. Their learning needs cannot be neglected. If our postsecondary education enterprise does neglect them, we run the risk of large numbers of people

being underemployed or unemployed. Adults who earn degrees should be held to the same requirements and standards as any other student. But adults may have learned some of the required skills and knowledge outside of the college classroom.

He believes that adults need to be given the opportunity to demonstrate their accomplishments through appropriate and valid assessments.

The president and executive director of Bellsouth Foundation makes the case that special populations of students (such as under- and unemployed single mothers, high school dropouts, and new immigrants) must be invited back to education and receive incentives to encourage them to succeed in academic or training programs. These people are often removed from any work environment and are afraid of the formal, unfamiliar structures. She concludes by stating, "If we have quality programs, but these people are not accessing them, we can never attain our goal of a fully literate, employable, and participatory citizenship."

General Observations

Many individuals support the general intentions of both objectives four and five. If the pursuit of these objectives lead directly to actions that improve student learning, strengthen academic programs, and increase degree completion rates, then many individuals advocate Goal Five. However, there are major considerations and issues that need to be resolved in this process in order to obtain effective results. Many people offered important ideas and recommendations that can serve to guide future activities in these areas.

In regard to objective four, there are several areas of concern. First, many people ask if the proposed reporting system is feasible. Institutional and student diversity make it difficult to implement a uniform, standard reporting system. Variations in student populations, regional missions, and in the number of credits to complete academic programs compounds the difficulty of centralized data collection. Second, there are cost and resource implications. Some individuals believe the reporting system duplicates requirements originating at the federal level. Third, there is a concern regarding whether the investment of substantial resources will actually increase student degree completion rates. Fourth, the reporting system proposed may lead to institution-by-institution comparisons. Institutions serving students who are most in need of access to education will be penalized by the use of persistence/completion rates; consequently they will shift their priorities to recruit more affluent students who are likely to graduate.

Individuals recommend that the federal government should seek the advice of states and consortia who have experience in developing reporting systems. At least 38 states have developed and collected composite statistics on persistence and graduation rates. Another recommendation is that the reporting system should dovetail with the reporting associated with the Student-Right-to-Know Act.

Similar concerns are expressed about objective five. Most witnesses ask how the proposed assessment system will lead to improvements. They are unclear whether the emphasis is accountability (the collection of statistics) or if reforms and changes are the goal to strengthen academic programs and increase student learning. There are already a

large number of assessment initiatives underway. Some individuals describe examples from their own institutions. Others note the duplication of efforts called for in objective five. Regional accrediting associations and the professions have developed principles and standards of effective practice. They believe that assessment efforts need to build upon current activities.

Some individuals believe that the Task Force has neglected to thoroughly consider the impact of national standards upon the diversity of students and the differences in institutional missions. There is a fear that the result will be a homogeneous curriculum that negatively impacts upon non-traditional students especially minorities and adults.

Despite these issues, individuals offer recommendations about this assessment effort. Additional skills are important and need to be added to the objective. Others emphasize that multiple methods should be used to assess student learning. A consensus-building process is necessary to set goals that includes representatives from all relevant constituencies. Both basic literacy and the needs of non-traditional students (minorities and adults) should be considered more fully. There are good assessment models that should be disseminated to the public so that institutions may improve their own programs.

The testimonies provide insights about unclear intentions and purposes of these initiatives as well as the relevant issues that should be considered and explored before a system is developed and implemented. Nearly all witnesses expressed support for improving student learning and their completion of degrees. Ultimately, the participation of

institutions in these endeavors will be contingent upon the explicit purposes and resolution of key issues.

Appendix A: Information About Participants

Table 1

Participants Who Testified by Institutional Control

Testimony	Institutions	Private	TOTAL
Oral	25	11	36
Written	21	5	26
TOTAL	46	16	62

Table 2

Participants Who Testified by Objective & Institutional Type

Institutional Type	Objective 4	Objective 5	Objectives	TOTAL
Research	--	5	10	15
Doctoral	2	3	4	9
Comprehensive	--	4	7	11
Liberal Arts	1	2	5	8
Community College	1	2	12	15
Technical/Proprietary	--	--	4	4
TOTAL	4	16	42	62

Table 3

Participants Who Testified by Professional Affiliation & Objective

Professional Affiliation	Objective 4	Objective 5	Objectives	TOTAL
State System & Association Officials	2	7	12	21
Governing Boards	--	--	2	2
Presidents/Chancellors	1	1	18	20
Administration	2	2	9	13
Faculty	--	11	10	21
Educational Testing	--	--	2	2
Consulting	--	--	3	3
Accreditation	--	2	11	13
Student	--	--	3	3
Business	--	--	2	2
TOTAL	5	23	72	100

Table 4

Participants Who Testified by Objective & Geographic Region

By Region	Objective 4	Objective 5	Objectives	TOTAL
Northeast	--	2	10	12
North Central	1	7	13	21
Central Midwest	4	5	10	19
South	--	3	15	18
Southwest	--	--	4	4
Northwest	--	--	3	3
West	--	2	12	14
TOTAL	5	19	67	91

Appendix B: Individuals and Affiliations

Hearing Participants and Their Affiliations

Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools
Jean Russell, administrator

Alcorn State University*
Walter Washington, president

Alverno College
Marcia Mentkowski, director of Research and Evaluation

American Association of Community Colleges/Small and Rural College Division
Bill Griffin, president, Mid-Plains Community College

American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business*
Milton Blood, managing director and director of accreditation

American Association of Presidents of Independent Colleges and Universities
Thomas E. Corts, president, Samford University

The American Association of University Professors
Jack L. Nelson, professor, Rutgers University

American College Testing
Richard L. Ferguson, president

American Council on Education
Henry A. Spille, director, The Center for Adult Learning and Educational Credentials

American Mathematical Association of Two-Year Colleges*
Karen Sharp, president

American Medical Association*
John J. Fauser, director, Committee of Allied Health Education and Accreditation

American Psychological Association*
Paul D. Nelson, deputy executive director for Education

American Student Association of Community Colleges
Byron Keelin, co-president

The Arts Institutes International
Robert B. Knutson, chairman and chief executive officer

Associated Colleges of the South*
Wayne Anderson, president

Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges
Roger Blunt, vice chair, Board of Directors

Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Michigan
Edward O. Blews, Jr., president

The Association for Institutional Research
John Muffo, president elect

Ball State University**
Paul Ranieri, professor of English

Barry University*
Sister Jeanne O'Laughlin, president

Bassist College
Donald Bassist, president

BellSouth Foundation
Patricia L. Willis, president and executive director

Blackburn College
Patricia Kowal, Learning Center director and Freshmen Writing coordinator

Bronx Community College
Carl J. Poloczyk, dean of Academic Affairs

California Postsecondary Commission
Warren Fox, executive director

California State University, Chico*
Gregory Tropea, professor, Department of Philosophy

California State University, Hayward
Norma S. Rees, president

California State University, San Bernardino*
Diane F. Halpern, professor of Psychology

California State University, San Marcos
Bill W. Stacy, president

Chicago State University
Dolores Cross, president

Cleary College*
Thomas Sullivan, president

The College Board
Donald Stewart, president

Columbia College-Chicago
Gail Dantzker, Department of Educational Studies

Council for Independent Colleges*
Allen P. Splete, president

Council for International Exchange of Scholars*
Jody K. Olsen, executive director

Council on Postsecondary Accreditation
Ladell Payne, president, Randolph-Macon College

Council on Social Work Education
Nancy Rudolph, director of Standards and Accreditation

East Carolina University*
Richard Miller, professor of Philosophy

Elgin Community College
Steve Cordogan, director of Institutional Research

El Paso Community College
Dennis E. Brown, president

Fitzpatrick Associates
Clara Fitzpatrick

Florida Atlantic University*
Mantha Vlahos Mehallis, past president of the Association for Institutional Research

Florida State University
Robert Glidden, provost and vice president, Academic Affairs

Georgia Southern University*
William E. Knight, assistant director, Institutional Research

Georgia State University
Mitchell Haralson, director of Educational Talent Search Project

Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis
Victor Borden, director, Information Management and Institutional Research

Illinois State University
Carolyn Strohkirch, Communication Department
Lynn Brice, Communication Department

Independent Colleges of Indiana
T.K. Olson, president

Indiana Vocational Technical College
Gerald I. Lamkin, president

Inter Faculty Organization of the State of Minnesota*
Gunnar Wikstron, Jr., director, Academic Affairs

The Jefferson Circle
David Trickett, president

Jefferson College*
Gery C. Hochanadel, president

Kent State University*

Terry Kuhn, associate vice-president

D. A. Lawrence, professor**

Gregory Rogers, director, Academic Assessment

Los Angeles Harbor College*

Bonnie Easley, Learning Assistance Center

Loyola University of Chicago

V. Scott Solberg, assistant professor, Counseling and Educational Psychology

Maricopa Community College District Governing Board

Linda B. Rosenthal, member

McHenry College*

Robert Bartlett, president

Middle States Commission on Higher Education

John H. Erickson, associate director

Minnesota Community College System

Geraldine A. Evans, chancellor

Montgomery Community College*

Robert Parilla, president

National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities

David Winter, president, Westmont College

National Education Association

Virginia Ann Shadwick, president NEA Higher Education Association

National Home Study Council

Michael P. Lambert, executive director

National Office for Arts Accreditation in Higher Education*

Samuel Hope, executive director

North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Patricia Thrash, executive director

Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges

Joseph A. Malik, executive director, Commission on Colleges

Ohio Dominican College

Sister Mary Andrew Matesich, president

Ohio University Eastern Campus

David Miles

Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education*

Hans Brisch, chancellor

Pacific Telesis Group

Jere A. Jacobs, assistant vice president

St. John's College, Annapolis, Maryland

Christopher B. Nelson, president

San Diego Community College District

Augustine P. Gallego, chancellor

South Carolina Higher Education Assessment Network

David Underwood

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

James T. Rogers, executive director Commission on Colleges

Southern Growth Policies Board

Oliver C. Johnson Jr., senior associate

Strategic Learning Services

Mark Cheren

Triton College

D. Degardo, professor

United Negro College Fund, Inc.**

Norman C. Francis, chairman, Government Affairs Committee

University of Arizona*

Jon Cline, student

University of California at Los Angeles*

Arthur M. Cohen, director, Center for the Study of Community Colleges

University of Connecticut*

James Watt, University Assessment Office

University of Delaware

Mary P. Richards, dean of Arts and Sciences

University of Georgia

Louise M. Tomlinson, assistant professor of Reading

University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Robert Ennis, professor of Education

University of San Francisco

Anita DeFrantz, School of Education

James Steve Counelis, School of Education*

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Richard Barrows, interim vice chancellor

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Krisann Pergande, doctoral student

Valdosta State College*

John Hummel, Georgia/Alabama Center for Critical Thinking

William Huitt, Georgia/Alabama Center for Critical Thinking

Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges**

Earl Hale, executive director

Western Association of Schools and Colleges

John C. Petersen, executive director, Accrediting Commission for Community and

Junior College

Wilbur Wright College, City Colleges of Chicago
Donald Thompson, professor emeritus of English

* Submitted written testimony only; did not testify in person.

** Did not review these.

(NOTE: In certain cases, a participant's testimony may not represent the view of the organization he/she is affiliated with.)